weight of the Allied blow. As the preparations for the attack had ceased to have the character attached to surprise, they were given plenty of time to perfect theirs for defence.

Nature of peril

The " 250 trains " spirit had supervened—slow, methodical and obvious. Time had been given to elaborate guarantees to allay Haig's suspicions as to the effect of Unity of Command on his authority—but time also had been vouchsafed the Germans to perfect their defence. By this time friend and foe alike knew all about the plan ; the former gossiping about it, the latter preparing against it. The surprise had developed into the most elaborate and best advertised attack in the War.

The French themselves do not appear to have known at the time about the German capture of their plans in February. The second incident, on 4th April, of the betrayal of their complete plans was fully known to the" French General Staff, but not a whisper reached the Cabinet, or for all I know, the British Staff, of the fact that the Germans were already in possession of the French plans. M. Painleve stated that these momentous incidents, which ought to have constituted overruling considerations, were never revealed to the French Government until after the battle was fought. They changed the whole character of the operation, the success of which depended entirely on surprise. Nivelle was attacking the most formidable bastion on the German Front

after the enemy had received ample and accurate knowledge of his intentions, and made the most effective arrangements to baffle them.

Joffre's plan avoided a direct attack on this fortress and proposed to pinch it out without direct assault by attacks on both flanks. Nivelle's idea was that